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SENATE BILL NO. 1254

Offered January 8, 2025

Prefiled January 8, 2025

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 15.2-2223.6, relating to comprehensive plan; environmental justice strategy.

Patron—Bagby

Referred to Committee on Local Government

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 15.2-2223.6 as follows:

§ 15.2-2223.6. Comprehensive plan shall consider adopting an environmental justice strategy.

A. For purposes of this section:

"Environmental justice community" means the same as that term is defined in § 2.2-234, as determined by the most currently available demographic information compiled for census tracts or census blocks within the local planning commission's jurisdiction, provided that any discrete geographic area smaller than a census tract or census block within the local planning commission's jurisdiction may be designated as an environmental justice community in accordance with the definition set forth in § 2.2-234.

"Fenceline community" means the same as that term is defined in § 2.2-234.

B. Beginning July 1, 2025, each city with a population greater than 20,000 and each county with a population greater than 100,000 shall, during the next scheduled and all subsequent reviews of its comprehensive plan, as required in § 15.2-2230, consider adopting an environmental justice strategy that meets the requirements of this section.

C. The environmental justice strategy shall:

1. Identify each environmental justice community and fenceline community within the local planning commission's jurisdiction;

2. Identify major sources of pollution or hazardous waste sites within the locality's jurisdiction, on the basis of data from any federal, state, or local environmental agency or health department;

3. Identify objectives and policies to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in environmental justice communities and fenceline communities by means that include, but are not limited to, the reduction of pollution exposure, the improvement of air and water quality, emergency management, resilience to increased flooding, excessive heat and other impacts of a changing climate, and the promotion of public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, and physical activity;

4. Identify objectives and policies to promote civic engagement in public decision-making processes by members of environmental justice communities and fenceline communities;

5. Identify objectives and policies that prioritize improvements and programs that address the needs of environmental justice communities and fenceline communities, such as low-cost broadband Internet programs and Internet adoption initiatives encompassing digital literacy and device access, job training, access to healthy foods, access to aging in place assistance, equitable access to public parks and greenways, increased tree canopy, public transit services, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, electric vehicle charging, and other clean transportation options; and

6. Identify objectives and policies that encourage linking public transit with community and health services and siting or co-locating health services in unconventional settings to ensure convenient access for all community members.

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